

throw money at the same thing they have just made more expensive.

But here is where the bad idea turns literally into a terrible one. The Democrats wouldn't help families directly. This isn't some simple voucher that families can use as they please. My colleagues have produced an insanely tangled scheme where the truckloads of money go from Washington to State governments, to the childcare centers, one leaky bucket after another.

The problems run deeper than that. Democrats want States to sign up for badly underfunded mandates. That is the effect, because the retirement programs would surely last forever; but, for accounting purposes, Democrats are pretending the money stops after a decade. Many States will not be keen to be socialist guinea pigs.

Then there is the fact that the assistance is doled out in incredibly confusing and uneven ways. The subsidies start and stop with no rhyme or reason.

Listen to what a left-leaning organization, the People's Policy Project, has uncovered. They have found that, in year one, a family that earns \$1 over their State median income "will be eligible for zero subsidies, meaning that they will be on the hook for the entire unsubsidized price," which they estimate will now cost "at least \$13,000 per year higher than" it does right now.

The researcher repeats himself because it is so unbelievable. Here is the quote:

Having a family income just \$1 higher than [your State's median income] would result in you being ineligible for child care subsidies in 2022 even as the unsubsidized price of child care skyrockets due to the wage and other mandates in the Democratic proposal.

This is obviously a perverse outcome and it's not clear whether lawmakers even realize what they are about to do.

This isn't just one technical glitch. It is emblematic of how ill-conceived their whole experiment is. There are 10 problems like this on every single page.

I should add, the families who even get to participate in the mess I've just laid out, they are actually the lucky ones because Democrats want Big Government to pick winners and losers among different families who make different choices.

Many American families make one set of sacrifices so that both parents can work full time. These are the people the Democrats are trying to reward, although their plan fails in practice.

But Americans are allowed to have different aspirations. Some families make different sacrifices to have a parent at home full time. Others prefer flexible middle grounds that involve part-time work plus in-home childcare. The Democrats' toddler takeover wouldn't give any of them a dime—no diversity, no flexibility. Institutional daycare or nothing. In fact, it is worse than nothing, because a family who wants a provider to come to their house part time or wants to participate in a neighborhood nanny share will

now be stuck in an inflated market. They will have to bid against the employers the Democrats have blessed and subsidized.

This is the essence of what the Democratic plan would do: Big Government and Big Labor work together to reward some family arrangements and punish others.

Our all-Democrat government is already botching the things that actually are government's job—projecting strength abroad, maintaining energy independence—but they can't even do that right. Just look at the poll numbers. The last thing families need are for Democrats to appoint themselves national daycare czars and then botch that, too.

I haven't even touched on one of the most sinister parts of this whole proposal.

For parents who do use childcare outside the home, faith-based options are incredibly popular. The Bipartisan Policy Center estimates that 53 percent of parents who use center-based care use ones that are linked to faith-based organizations, but the same Democrats who are letting far-left propaganda trickle down from the universities into K-12 schools are now declaring war on faith-based childcare. Washington Democrats want to unleash the woke mob on church daycare. There are at least two parts of their bill that are direct attacks.

First, liberals are trying to chase faith-based providers out of the daycare industry by denying funds to any facility they deem discriminatory. Of course, today's radical left tosses around these kinds of accusations at any remotely traditional institution. Faith-based childcare centers could potentially get their subsidies ripped away if they don't hire who secular bureaucrats want them to hire, set up their facilities the way secular bureaucrats want them set up, or even—listen to this—if they give preference to kids of their own faith. Orthodox Jewish daycare centers could get kicked out if they say Orthodox Jewish families get first dibs. Evangelical centers could get punished by bureaucrats if the families who belong to the church are accommodated first.

This is a joke. The left is trying to weaponize the word "discrimination" to push faith-based childcare out of business.

Another part of their bill goes out of its way to deny money for facility upgrades to buildings that are used for "sectarian instruction or religious worship." If a faith-based center leads kids in prayer or teaches them their families' faiths, they don't get the funding that everybody else gets? We see this over and over from the culture warriors. They pretend they are happy to have religious groups in the public square but only if they check their beliefs at the door.

Now, a few years ago, the Supreme Court had to strike down a similar policy that penalized faith-based organiza-

tions. A State had tried to deny a church a widely available grant to fix up its playground. The Court took a look at it and struck down the law 7 to 2.

But the political left is right back at it. Just look at which Federal bureaucrat would oversee this giant mess. Well, of course, it is none other than Secretary Becerra, the hard-left culture warrior who got famous by suing the Little Sisters of the Poor for being too Catholic and by suing crisis pregnancy centers for being pro-life. This is the person whom Democrats want to give sweeping new powers over families' private choices? Secretary Becerra gets a giant slush fund to bring President Biden's inflation into childcare and discriminate against people of faith—just one more way Democrats' reckless taxing-and-spending spree would hurt working families.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise in support of the nomination of Rufus Gifford to be Chief of Protocol with the rank of Ambassador.

Rufus, a native son of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, transitioned to a career in public service after a very successful career in the private sector.

In 2013, President Obama nominated Rufus to be U.S. Ambassador to Denmark, and he was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

In Copenhagen, Rufus was the headliner in a reality TV show, "I Am the Ambassador." The show's innovative approach to public diplomacy gave Danish viewers, particularly young people, an all-access pass into the life of a U.S. Ambassador and the U.S. diplomatic presence in the country. In a country of just 5 million people, 200,000 Danes tuned in to see how the U.S. Ambassador advanced his country's core interests. One Danish viewer said that "it is the type of show you would watch with your mother-in-law, and she would say, oh, he is a lovely man, that Rufus Gifford."

Rufus's effusive personality makes him the perfect choice for this new role as Chief of Protocol. In Copenhagen, Denmark, Rufus opened the Ambassador's residence to thousands of visitors. As Chief of Protocol, he will once again play host to foreign dignitaries at the White House and Blair House. His hand will be the first outstretched to greet a Prime Minister, President, or Monarch at a time when diplomacy is most needed.

Ambassador Gifford was unanimously confirmed by this body in 2013 and was

unanimously reported out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee 4 months ago. I ask unanimous consent that Ambassador Gifford once again earn the support of the full Senate and be confirmed as Chief of Protocol with the rank of Ambassador.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Calendar No. 320, Rufus Gifford, of Massachusetts, to be Chief of Protocol, and to have the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service; that the nomination be confirmed; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order on the nomination and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Reserving the right to object, the Senators in this Chamber, including Senator MARKEY, know precisely why I have a hold on this nominee.

Right now, as we speak, hundreds of thousands of Russian troops are amassed on the border of Ukraine waiting to invade. This calamitous foreign policy disaster is Joe Biden's fault. This is the direct consequence of Joe Biden's surrender to Vladimir Putin on Nord Stream 2. What is Nord Stream 2? It is a pipeline being constructed from Russia to Germany to carry natural gas. Putin is building Nord Stream 2. Why? To go around Ukraine because right now Russian gas goes through Ukraine.

Putin didn't just wake up recently and decide to invade Ukraine; he has wanted to invade Ukraine for years. He did so in 2014, but he stopped short of full invasion. Why? Because the Ukrainian energy infrastructure was necessary to get the Russian gas to market. Nord Stream 2 is all about building an alternative avenue to get the Russian gas to Europe, so then the Russian tanks can ride into Ukraine.

We had a bipartisan victory. Indeed, the Senator from Massachusetts supported my bipartisan legislation sanctioning the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline in December of 2019. When President Trump signed that bipartisan legislation into law, Nord Stream 2 was halted that day. Not the next day, not the next week, not the next month—that day, the pipeline shut down. We had won a major, bipartisan foreign policy victory. We had stopped Russia. We had stopped Putin.

That pipeline remained dormant for over a year—a hunk of metal at the bottom of the ocean—until Joe Biden arrived at the White House. Joe Biden was sworn into office on January 20, 2021. Four days later, January 24, Putin began building the pipeline again—4 days later. Why? Because the Biden White House made the decision to

waive the sanctions on Nord Stream 2 and to give Vladimir Putin a multibillion-dollar gift for generations to come and in doing so, to set the stage for the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

When Biden waived sanctions on Nord Stream 2, Ukraine and Poland both said that it was creating a security crisis in Europe, that it was increasing dramatically the chances that Russia would invade Ukraine. This invasion that we are facing the very real prospect of is Joe Biden's fault. But do you know what? It is also the fault of Senate Democrats.

For 2 years, we had bipartisan agreement to stop Nord Stream 2, and we succeeded. When there was a Republican President in office, Donald Trump, I and other Republicans were perfectly willing to hold President Trump to account, to press him to stand up against Nord Stream 2, and he did.

As soon as a Democrat got into the White House, our Democratic colleagues decided that partisan loyalty was more important than national security, that partisan loyalty to the Democratic Party was more important than standing up to Russia, was more important than defending Ukraine. So, suddenly, we have seen the Democrats in this Chamber bending over backward to avoid stopping Nord Stream 2.

I want to be very clear. There is a lot of discussion about Joe Biden having a phone call with Putin today. Well, that phone call is real nice, but it is not going to stop an invasion. I will tell you what will stop an invasion. Joe Biden could stop the invasion today by simply following the law and sanctioning Nord Stream 2.

This body could make a major step today to prevent war in Europe, to prevent Russia from invading Ukraine right now, by doing what Democrats and Republicans had agreed to do, had done together until Biden surrendered to Russia. We can do that by passing legislation that I have pending at the desk that would sanction Nord Stream 2, that would stop the project, which would mean Russia would remain dependent on Ukrainian energy infrastructure. For the same reason Russia didn't continue to invade in 2014, it would stop the invasion. We can do that right now.

Accordingly, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 3322, which is at the desk. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there an objection to the modification?

Mr. MARKEY. Reserving the right to object, Senator CRUZ knows that the Democrats have offered the Republicans—offered him a vote on Nord Stream 2 as part of consideration of the National Defense Authorization

Act. His own colleagues are the ones who objected to a vote being held on the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline as part of that agreement that was generously offered by the Democrats to the Republicans.

The problem is not on this side; the problem is on the side of the Senator from Texas. Yet he continues to hold up dozens of State Department officials, many of them career officials who should be on their jobs around the world right now.

Ultimately, right now, the onus lies on the Republican side for not having a vote on the subject that the Senator from Texas has raised, the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline; therefore, I object to the motion from the gentleman from Texas.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection to the modification is heard.

Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I would note that what we just heard was Democrats in this Chamber objecting to sanctioning Nord Stream 2. It is worth understanding what that means. It means that Senate Democrats prioritize political loyalty to Joe Biden and Kamala Harris more than they do standing up to Vladimir Putin.

A month or two from now, if, God forbid, we see Russian tanks moving into Ukraine, remember this moment where Senate Democrats objected and said: No, we won't sanction the pipeline. We won't save Ukraine. We won't stand up to Russia.

You know, the whole country endured Democrats going on and on and on for 4 years—"Russia, Russia, Russia"—and someone who didn't follow politics closely could be forgiven if they actually believed the rhetoric from the Democrats. But it turns out that by saying "Russia, Russia, Russia," what they really meant was "We hate Donald Trump" because when it comes to standing up to Russia, for decades, Democrats had shown weakness and appeasement to the Soviet Union. As soon as Donald Trump was gone, we see Democrats going back to weakness and appeasement to Russia again.

The Russian troops on the Ukrainian border are Joe Biden's fault and they are Senate Democrats' fault for being unwilling to stand up to a President of their own party.

I would note that this particular nominee is a nominee to be the head of protocol at the State Department. It is really bad protocol to drive tanks into somebody else's country.

You want to talk about protocol, how about the protocol of, let's defend American national security interests; let's defend Europe; let's defend our allies; let's stand up to a tyrannical bully named Vladimir Putin. Sadly, Democrats don't want to do that. Accordingly, I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The objection is heard.

Mr. MARKEY. I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). The Republican whip.

REMEMBERING MARCELLA LEBEAU

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin, I want to take just a few minutes to honor two members of the "greatest generation" whom we lost recently, Marcella LeBeau and Bob Dole.

Marcella LeBeau died on Sunday, November 21. She was from my home State of South Dakota and a member of the Two Kettle Band of the Cheyenne River Sioux who served in the Army Nurse Corps during World War II, including time on the frontlines treating the wounded at the Battle of the Bulge. She was decorated by both France and Belgium for her service.

After the war, she returned to South Dakota, spending 31 years working for the Indian Health Service, including as Director of Nursing, while raising eight children.

She was a powerful advocate for Native Americans throughout her entire life and was a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Council for 4 years and a founding member of the North American Women's Association.

Even in retirement, Marcella continued to advocate for Native Americans and also found time to open a quilting shop with her granddaughter featuring, among other things, the Lakota star quilt, used for honoring and naming ceremonies, memorials, and various life achievements.

Earlier in November, she traveled to Oklahoma to attend the ceremony for her induction into the National Native American Hall of Fame.

REMEMBERING ROBERT J. DOLE

As we know, Bob Dole died on Sunday. Bob served as an officer in the 10th Mountain Division during World War II. Late in the war, he was seriously wounded in action during an attempt to rescue a fellow soldier, and he bore the resulting injuries the rest of his life.

Forced by his wounds to abandon his plans to be a surgeon, he quickly found another way to help his fellow Americans: public service. He was elected to the Kansas House of Representatives in 1950 and never looked back. In 1960, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; and, in 1968, he won election to the U.S. Senate, where he served for 27 years.

He was a Senator's Senator, a master of procedure, and a true legislator whose achievements ranged from Social Security reform to veterans legislation, to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Even after he ended his long career in public service, Bob continued to serve. He was an important supporter of the World War II Memorial here in Washington, DC, and could often be found there visiting with his fellow veterans who had traveled on Honor Flights.

Marcella and Bob came from different places and different backgrounds and, so far as I know, never crossed

paths in this life, but they had in common that abiding commitment to service that characterized so many members of the "greatest generation." Both Bob and Marcella spent their entire lives serving their country and their fellow citizens, and even retirement didn't slow them down.

The "greatest generation" was a fixture of American life for many decades, but its members are rapidly slipping away. Fewer than 250,000 of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II are still with us, and that number dwindles every day.

We need to make sure that the passing of the "greatest generation" does not mean the passing of the virtues that they modeled for us: humility, patriotism, quiet service, duty, and perseverance.

We need to remember Bob Dole and Marcella LeBeau and the many others like them who, in war and in peace, lived lives of service to our country.

My thoughts and prayers are with Bob and Marcella's families, with Bob's wife Elizabeth and his daughter Robin, and with Marcella's children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren.

BUILD BACK BETTER ACT

Mr. President, Democrats continue to work on their reckless tax-and-spending spree—or perhaps I should say their reckless tax-and-spending disaster.

Tax hikes, deficit spending, inflationary spending—it is all there in Democrats' spending package—plus, of course, that tax break for wealthy Americans. Yeah, that is right, a tax break for millionaires. I am talking, of course, about Democrats' expansion of the State and local tax deduction known as the SALT deduction, which would overwhelmingly benefit affluent taxpayers in mainly Democrat-led States and do almost nothing for middle- and lower-income families.

For months and months, Democrats have been going on about the need for the wealthy to pay their fair share of taxes, which is, I find, at the height of irony that the Democrats' current bill contains a substantial tax break for wealthy Americans. I am not surprised that Democrats kept that SALT provision out of the Ways and Means Committee markup in the House of Representatives. After constantly talking about making the wealthy pay their fair share, it is a little awkward to publicly debate your tax break for the wealthy.

Instead, Democrats stuffed the tax break into the reconciliation bill under the subtitle of, of all things, "social safety net." Yes, that is right, social safety net.

Well, who benefits from this particular safety net exactly?

About 94 percent of the tax benefit would go to the top 20 percent of earners. About 70 percent will go to the top 5 percent of earners. And nearly one-third of this tax benefit would go to the top 1 percent of households in this country.

The average tax savings for middle-income households from raising the SALT cap would be 20 bucks—\$20. Meanwhile, millionaires would receive an average tax cut of almost \$15,000.

Well, I guess the priorities of wealthy Democrat donors in blue States trump Democrats' plans to make wealthy Americans pay their fair share. Not only does the bill contain a tax break for millionaires, this tax break is one of the most expensive parts of the bill. In fact, it is the second most expensive item in the House-passed bill over the next 5 years.

That is right. According to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, only Democrats' childcare and pre-K programs would exceed the cost of raising the SALT cap.

Now, given their rhetoric, you would think that Democrats might have chosen to forgo this tax break for the wealthy and spend the money on one of their other programs that they fund for only part of their bill's 10-year budget window. But no. This tax break is apparently so important to Democrats that they are willing to shortchange some of their other priorities in order to include it.

We have also heard a lot from Democrats about how corporations need to pay their fair share, which, I guess, is whatever Democrats determine it to be. The Democrats' bill does include a corporate minimum tax—except it turns out that it is not really a corporate minimum tax and some corporations won't have to pay the full tax.

Democrats have carved out certain exceptions to the corporate minimum tax, including clean energy tax credits. So if you are a corporation engaged in Democrat-approved activities, you will be able to avoid paying some or all of the corporate minimum tax. If you don't qualify for Democrats' approved carve-outs, on the other hand, you can look forward to paying the full tax bill.

Democrats' hypocrisy might be amusing if this bill weren't so dangerous, but, unfortunately, there is not much to laugh about when it comes to this bill.

Democrats' Build Back Better spending disaster will pour \$1.75 trillion in government money into an already overheated economy, which will likely prolong the serious inflation we are currently experiencing.

Democrats' helped create our current inflation situation by flooding the economy with a lot of unnecessary government money earlier this year, and now Democrats are going to pour another \$1.75 trillion onto the inflationary fire.

American families are already experiencing the worst inflation in more than 30 years. I don't even want to think about what inflation will look like if Democrats succeed in passing on another \$1.75 trillion in spending.

Now, I say \$1.75 trillion, but, of course, Democrats only arrived at that number through a series of shell games and budget gimmicks. The real cost of